

Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007 - JORDAN

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II bin Hussein. It has a population of approximately six million. The constitution concentrates executive and legislative authority in the king. The multiparty parliament consists of the 55-member House of Notables (Majlis al-Ayan), appointed by the king, and a 110-member elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-Nuwwab). The November 2007 elections for the lower house of parliament by and large went smoothly; however, local observers alleged some irregularities. Authorities effectively controlled the security forces, but there were some instances in which domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) accused members of the police and security forces of committing human rights abuses.

The government respected human rights in some areas, but its overall record continued to reflect problems. The government restricted citizens' right to change their government. Domestic and international NGOs reported cases of torture, arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention, and the continuance of poor prison conditions. Impunity, denial of due process of law, and limited judicial independence remained problems. Infringements on citizens' privacy rights continued. The government harassed religious activists and opposition political party members and restricted to varying degrees freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement. Legal and societal discrimination existed against women, converts from Islam, and persons of Palestinian origin. Restrictions on labor rights and abuse of foreign domestic workers remained problems.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

In contrast with 2007, there were no reports during the year that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. The government completed investigations of allegations made in two 2007 deaths in police custody due to mistreatment.

Two prison guards were sentenced to two and one-half years in prison with hard labor for the fatal May 2007 beating of Firas Zeidan in detention. The court also sentenced a third guard to two months for neglect in carrying out duties, found a fourth guard innocent, and removed and fined the prison director 120 dinars (approximately \$168) for ordering Zeidan into solitary confinement without assessing his health. According

to autopsy reports, Zeidan's lung collapsed and his body was covered with bruises and contusions.

The medical and police investigations of the August 2007 death of Ala Abu Tair in Swaqa prison stated the cause of death was a heart attack. The government removed the prison director after the autopsy revealed Tair's body was heavily bruised.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, but several domestic and international NGOs alleged torture and mistreatment of prisoners in police and security detention facilities. Article 208 of the penal code prohibits torture by public officials, including psychological harm, and provides penalties of up to three years' imprisonment, including hard labor if serious injury occurs. During the year there were no prosecutions of torture under this article.

Although torture is illegal in the country, an October report by the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Torture and Impunity in Jordan's Prisons," concluded that torture remained a widespread practice. Interviews with 66 prisoners in seven of the country's 10 prisons produced allegations of ill-treatment, which HRW concluded often amounted to torture. Common forms of torture detailed in the interviews were beatings with cables and sticks and suspension in metal cuffs for hours at a time. Political prisoners, including Islamists convicted of crimes against national security, reportedly received greater abuse than ordinary prisoners. The report also documented the severe lack of punishment and failure to investigate abusive guards.

In a January 2007 report the UN special rapporteur on torture described police and security forces as practicing "widespread" torture based on "consistent and credible allegations," which he stated were substantiated by forensic medical evidence. April and May 2007 reports from the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR) and Amnesty International (AI), respectively, alleged torture and ill-treatment in government detention centers. The National Center for Human Rights' (NCHR) "Fifth Report on Prison Conditions," released in December 2007, reported 45 complaints of mistreatment or torture at Public Security Directorate (PSD) prisons. In 2006 there were 46 reported complaints, down from 70 the previous year and even higher numbers in years prior. The NCHR report recounted allegations of mistreatment and abuse in General Intelligence Directorate (GID) facilities, but it did not provide specific information on these complaints.

According to press reports, some defendants before the State Security Court claimed they were tortured while in custody. Between September 2007 and May 2008 security forces allegedly tortured five men accused of monitoring military sites for Hamas, possessing firearms with illicit intent, obtaining information that would threaten national security, and recruiting people to join illegal operations. The men claimed that officers tortured them to obtain confessions. On January 14, two men accused of exporting weapons to the West Bank and possessing illegal weapons claimed their confessions were also obtained through torture. At year's end the cases against the men were ongoing.

On January 17, Nidal Momani, Tharwat Draz, and Sattam Zawahra repeated their May 2007 claims that they were beaten and psychologically pressured to confess to participating in plots to kill a foreign leader visiting the country in 2006. At year's end there were no new developments in their case.

There was no update in the case of the two defendants who reported in March 2007 before the State Security Court that security forces tortured them to force confessions.

At year's end there were no developments in the investigation of Ali Utoum's alleged August 2007 abduction and beating.

A police court sentenced Majid al-Rawashda, the Swaga prison warden who reportedly ordered beatings of several hundred inmates in August 2007, to two months' imprisonment and dismissed him from his position. The court exonerated 12 guards who participated in the beatings, stating that they were following orders. An NCHR investigation into the incident concluded that the inmates were beaten and ill-treated and that prison officials denied a large number of inmates access to medical care.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

According to several international and local NGOs, prisons continued to be overcrowded and understaffed, with inadequate food and health care and limited visitation. Prison guards beat detainees, usually with impunity, and prison riots and hunger strikes were common. However, prison health care somewhat improved, according to an August 12 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) report.

On April 14, Muwaggar prison inmates Firas al-'Utti, Hazim Ziyada, and Ibrahim al-'Ulayan burned to death during a riot. According to NCHR and HRW, mistreatment and beatings of inmates by some police officers led to the riot. As confirmed by the government, approximately 28 prisoners set fire to their mattresses, and prisoners in adjoining cells joined in the protest and shouted and inflicted harm on themselves with sharp objects. Prison guards entered the prison building to secure the burning cell, but

they reported being unable to open the doors because the prisoners had allegedly barricaded them with beds. One eyewitness said that the guards did nothing for 10 minutes despite cries from the prisoners inside the burning cell to open the doors. The NCHR asserted that the doors of the cell opened out, allowing them to be opened regardless of any barricade inside. According to eyewitnesses, when the fire was almost extinguished, the guards opened the doors and beat those who exited, then pushed 18 people back into the cell, including the three whose bodies were later found. After relocking the cell door, a second, much bigger fire started. HRW claimed that eyewitnesses to the killings were held in solitary confinement and lawyers, family members, and human rights investigators were not allowed to speak with them. The PSD investigation committee tasked with investigating the riots referred 23 inmates to the judiciary on charges of "causing damage to public property." The guards on duty did not face charges or punishment.

On April 15, according to the NCHR, dozens of inmates were injured during a riot in Swaqa prison that the government claimed was started by inmates out of solidarity with the rioters in Muwaqqar prison.

On July 7, according to the NCHR, 14 inmates at Jweideh prison went on a week-long hunger strike over visitation scheduling and harassment during transportation to court hearings.

The government generally held men, women, and juveniles in separate prison and detention facilities. The GID held some persons detained on national security grounds in separate detention facilities but conditions for such prisoners reportedly did not differ significantly.

The government permitted local and international human rights observers to visit prisons and to conduct private interviews in prisons. During the year the ICRC visited prisoners and detainees in all prisons, including those held by the GID and the military intelligence directorate, according to standard ICRC modalities. In February the NCHR opened a permanent human rights office in Swaqa prison, as directed by the king, to investigate and handle complaints by inmates. The NCHR also continued routine and unannounced prison inspections during the year; however, after it released a report on the April Muwaqqar riot that was critical of the government response, authorities closed the NCHR office in Swaqa prison and restricted prison inspections for several months.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, according to local and international human rights groups, the government did not always observe these prohibitions in practice. The law provides that citizens are subject to arrest, trial, and

punishment for the defamation of heads of state or public officials and dissemination of "false or exaggerated information outside the country that attacks state dignity."

Some human rights groups continued to voice concern over the 2006 Prevention of Terrorism Act, complaining that its definition of terrorism might lead nonviolent critics of the government to be arrested or detained indefinitely under the provisions of the act. However, the government had yet to make use of the act at year's end.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The PSD controls general police functions. The PSD, GID, and military share responsibility for maintaining internal security. The PSD reports to the interior minister with direct access to the king when necessary, and the GID in practice reports directly to the king. Security and policing activities were effective.

During the year citizens made allegations of corruption and abuse against both the PSD and GID. In 2007 citizens filed 625 complaints against PSD personnel. The PSD's preventative security office investigated officers' performance and reported incidents of poor officer performance to the PSD director's office. Citizens may file complaints of police abuse or corruption to one of the PSD's eight offices of complaints and human rights. Although allegations of torture and ill-treatment were widespread according to numerous credible observers, including the UN special rapporteur on torture, the low number of prosecutions for such crimes indicated PSD impunity was common. The GID's mechanisms for investigating complaints of abuses and the number of complaints against the GID were not made public.

New PSD officers received special instruction on preventing corruption and human rights abuses.

Arrest and Detention

The law allows suspects to be detained for up to 48 hours without a warrant in most cases. Human rights observers claimed that police continued to make arrests prior to obtaining warrants. The criminal code requires that police notify legal authorities within 48 hours of an arrest and that legal authorities file formal charges within 10 days of an arrest; however, local NGOs have stated courts routinely granted requests from prosecutors for 15-day extensions, as provided by law. This practice generally extended pretrial detention for protracted periods. Bail is allowed under the penal code and used. Some detainees reported not being allowed prompt access to a lawyer, but authorities generally permitted visitation by family members. There were allegations of incommunicado detention, particularly in GID facilities.

The State Security Court gives the judicial police, charged with conducting criminal investigations, authority to arrest and keep persons in custody for a period of seven days when necessary in any crime under the jurisdiction of the court, which includes many misdemeanors. In cases purportedly involving state security, the security forces arrested and detained citizens without warrants or judicial review, held defendants in lengthy pretrial detention without informing them of the charges against them, and did not allow defendants to meet with their lawyers, at times until shortly before trial. Defendants before the State Security Court usually met with their attorneys only one or two days before their trial. Several inmates were in detention without charge at year's end.

Local governors have the authority to invoke the Crime Prevention Law, which allows them to place individuals in administrative detention (prison) or under house arrest for up to one year without formally charging them. The NCHR objected to the number of administrative detentions, noting that 12,178 persons were detained in 2007.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary. In practice the judiciary's independence was compromised due to allegations of nepotism and the influence of special interests. The Judicial Council, a committee led by the president of the Court of Cassation, is comprised of other high-ranking judges from various courts and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). This council approves judicial appointments after the initial nominations by the MOJ and assigns and evaluates judges. The Judicial Council lacks the internal capacity to manage judicial administrative and financial matters that would ensure its independence.

The judicial system consists of civil, criminal, commercial, security, and religious courts. Most criminal cases are tried in civilian courts, which include the Court of Appeal; the High Court of Justice, convened for specific cases; and the Court of Cassation, the highest court. The State Security Court, headed by two military officers and one civilian as judges, has jurisdiction over offenses by civilians and military personnel against the state and drug-related crimes. From January through September the State Security Court heard 1,840 cases, of which 1,450 were adjudicated. The religious courts are subdivided into Shari'a (Islamic law) courts and tribunals for non-Muslims. Shari'a courts have jurisdiction over all matters relating to the personal status of Muslims, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Christian courts have jurisdiction over marriage and divorce cases among Christians, but Shari'a is applied in inheritance cases.

Trial Procedures

The law provides that all civilian court trials, including state security court trials, are open to the public unless the court determines otherwise. Juries were not used. Defendants were presumed innocent and entitled to legal counsel, which the government provided for the indigent. Defendants could present witnesses on their behalf, question witnesses presented against them, and appeal verdicts. All citizens were accorded these rights. Appeals were automatic for cases involving the death penalty. In the State Security Court, defendants convicted of felonies had the right to appeal their sentences to the Court of Cassation, which is authorized to review issues of both fact and law. Civil, criminal, and commercial courts accord equal weight to the testimony of men and women; however, in Shari'a courts the testimony of two women was equal to that of a man in most circumstances. Defense attorneys were guaranteed access to government-held evidence relevant to their clients' cases.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were reports by citizens and NGOs that the government continued to detain individuals, including political opposition members and journalists, allegedly for political reasons, and that governors continued to use administrative detentions for what appeared to be political reasons. In a few cases reported in the media or by human rights organizations, detainees were kept in solitary confinement and denied access to lawyers.

In December 2007 police arrested Hassan Abu-Shawer, a 19 year-old student, and charged him with "fueling national discord and dishonoring the national flag" during a protest by the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. Authorities released Abu-Shawer in June on a 3,000-dinar (approximately \$4,200) bond. At year's end there were no developments in his case.

At year's end there was no update in the reported arrest and detention since June 2007 of three IAF members in Zarqa or the arrest and detention since September 2007 of two IAF members in Aqaba.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent judiciary in civil matters, and individuals may bring lawsuits related to human rights violations and did so during the year. The High Court of Justice hears administrative complaints. The courts are open to all residents. Courts also have jurisdiction over any person in a civil or criminal matter, including in lawsuits where the government is a plaintiff or a defendant.

- f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits arbitrary interference in private matters; however, in practice the government did not respect this prohibition. Citizens widely believed that security officers monitored telephone conversations and Internet communication and read private correspondence, and that the government engaged in limited surveillance without a court order of persons deemed a threat to national security. The law requires that security forces obtain a warrant from the prosecutor general or a judge before conducting searches or otherwise interfering with these rights. In an April 2007 report, the AOHR alleged that the government conducted late night raids on homes and made arbitrary arrests between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Some political and religious activists reported that the GID withheld certificates of good behavior required for job applications or to open a business and threatened not to allow activists and their children to graduate from university.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press; however, the government imposed some restrictions on these rights. A 2007 press law abolished imprisonment of journalists for ideological offenses; however, limited detention and imprisonment of journalists for defamation and slander continued through provisions in the penal code. Many journalists reported that the threat of stringent fines of up to 20,000 dinars (\$28,000) led to self-censorship.

Citizens generally were able to criticize the government, although they exercised caution in regard to the king, the royal family, the GID, and many other topics deemed sensitive, such as religion.

On December 15, authorities prevented Gamal Eid, executive director of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, from entering Jordan, detained him for six hours at the airport, and deported him back to Cairo. Eid claims that these actions were taken by security officials due to his criticisms of freedom of expression in Jordan at a 2006 conference in Amman.

On November 2, authorities released Ahmad Abbadi; he had completed a two-year prison term for "undermining the country's reputation" based on a letter he posted online accusing senior officials of corruption and criticizing the government's respect for human rights.

The government continued to limit the freedom of the press. Media contacts reported that the government influenced the appointment of editors-in-chief at some major publications, whether directly by virtue of officials' positions on the boards of directors

of government-affiliated publications or indirectly through undisclosed contacts. When covering controversial subjects, government-owned Jordan Television reported only the government's position. International satellite television and Israeli and Syrian television broadcasts were available and unrestricted. The law provides foreign media operations freedom of expression.

During the year there were reported instances of arrest and government harassment of journalists and other writers based on their work.

For example, on October 19, authorities arrested poet and *Al Arab Al Yawm* reporter Islam Samhan and charged him with slandering Islam for incorporating verses of the Koran and prophets in his book of love poetry, which was perceived to contain sexual themes. On October 24, authorities released Samhan on a 1,000 dinar (\$1,400) bail, but at year's end he faced up to three years in jail and/or a 20,000 dinar (\$28,000) fine.

On August 17, the conciliation court acquitted Khalid Khawaja of contempt of a public employee. Khawaja, a reporter with the leading government-owned Arabic newspaper *Al-Rai*, was arrested for allegedly assaulting a police officer while he was covering the distribution of meat to underprivileged citizens in Ain Al-Basha in February 2007. Khawaja had previously filed a complaint against three police officers he claimed beat him.

Journalists claimed that the government used informants in the newsrooms and de facto censors at printing presses to review articles and reject language considered objectionable by the government. According to a 2006 Committee to Protect Journalists report, authorities pressured printers to delay publication of several newspapers until editors agreed to remove critical articles. Editors reportedly received telephone calls from security officials instructing them how to cover events. The annual report by the Amman-based National Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) stated that the government used detention and prosecution or the threat of prosecution to intimidate journalists into practicing self-censorship.

On March 12, the online news outlet Ammoun News posted a commentary article by veteran journalist Randa Habib that allegedly attacked a senior government official. The commentary article was removed from the Web site within an hour. It was posted again the following week. Subsequently, the Web site encountered technical difficulties that prevented most viewers within the country from accessing it.

The law forbids insulting the king, slandering the government or foreign leaders, offending religious beliefs, and stirring sectarian strife and sedition. The government prosecuted and convicted journalists for such crimes during the year. The punishment for defamation of the king or royal family is three years in prison. According to CDFJ,

there are more than 50 such cases against journalists pending before the Amman Court of First Instance.

On March 13, the Court of First Instance sentenced two editors and three reporters from the leading newspapers of *Ad-Dustour*, *Al-Arab Al-Yawm*, and *Al-Rai* to three months in jail for contempt of court and defamation. Four of the journalists were indicted after the Higher Judicial Council filed a complaint for publishing commentary on a ruling it passed. The fifth journalist was indicted for defamation after criticizing a government official on the Internet. The five were released pending appeals, which were ongoing at year's end.

On October 28, police arrested and detained *El-Ekhbariya* editor-in-chief Fayez Al-Ajrashi for five days in Al-Juweida prison before releasing him on a 3,000 dinar (\$4,200) bail. At year's end he faced criminal charges of "inflaming sectarian strife" and "sowing national discord" under the penal code before a military court and libel charges before a civil court. Ajrashi alleged both complaints were linked to his articles criticizing Amman governor Sa'ad Al-Manaseer's record and exposing cases of corruption.

The government continued to enforce bans on the publication of selected books for religious, moral, and political reasons. Some foreign films were edited prior to release.

Internet Freedom

The government controlled access to certain Internet content, and citizens and activists widely assumed that the government monitored electronic correspondence and Internet chat sites. According to 2007 International Telecommunications Union data, there were approximately 225,000 subscribers and 1.3 million users in the country. The government blocked access to some Web sites during the year.

In March the Ministry of Interior (MOI) issued instructions for monitoring Internet cafes for reasons of security, including the installation of cameras in Internet cafes to monitor users. The new measures require cafe owners to register users' personal data, hand over data about Web sites explored by users, and prevent access to questionable Web sites, as defined by the MOI.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The government placed limitations on academic freedom. Members of the academic community claimed that there was an ongoing intelligence presence in academic institutions, including the monitoring of academic conferences and lectures. Some academics alleged they received threats of dismissal.

On June 2, the IAF director sent a letter to the prime minister complaining about the government's regular harassment of university professors and their students. The letter claimed that university security and officials routinely detained and questioned students and limited academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly; however, the government restricted this right.

On July 31, an amended Public Gatherings Law was enacted. It stipulates that organizations do not need approval to hold routine internal meetings and activities but that routine public meetings, including workshops and trainings, still require approval. Governors are not required to provide a legal reason for denial of permission to hold an event, and there is no standard in the law for what constitutes an impermissible public gathering. If an organization fails to apply for permission for an event, its members face imprisonment from one to six months and a fine of up to 3,000 dinars (\$4,200). The response period was shortened from 72 to 48 hours, and if the governor does not issue a response within 48 hours, applicants are entitled to hold the event without legal liability.

Several civil society organizations and political parties accused the government of being stringent in issuing permits for public gatherings based on political factors rather than security concerns. Governors sometimes denied requests for peaceful demonstrations, political seminars, and civil society gatherings. In some cases, the government granted approval at the last moment, making it difficult for organizers to plan events.

On at least four occasions during the year, governors rejected Al-Urdun Al-Jadid Research Center's requests for meetings and conferences, including a seminar on economic issues.

On April 12 and on September 8, the Amman governor reportedly denied the IAF permission to stage a protest against the arrest of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members and a sit-in against Egyptian policy towards Gaza, respectively, both to be held in front of the Egyptian embassy. On November 14, the Al-Zarqa governor reportedly denied the IAF permission to hold a speech rally.

On June 4, the Balga governor rejected the bar association's request to hold a symposium focused on the constitutionality of a controversial casino deal.

There were no updates regarding the 20 IAF supporters imprisoned during a licensed protest in December 2007.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for the right of association; however, the government limited this freedom in practice. The law prohibits the use of associations for the benefit of any political organization.

The parliament passed and the king signed, on September 17, a new law governing associations that imposes numerous additional legal restrictions on associations and gives the government broader powers to intervene in associations' internal affairs. Civil society leaders expressed concern at many of the law's requirements, including increased government oversight and prior approval to receive foreign funding, as many have long depended on international sources for day-to-day operational costs.

The new law centralizes the registry of civil society in the Ministry of Social Development and gives the ministry the right to reject registration applications for any reason. The law introduces significant new oversight powers to the government over civil society and increases the government's engagement in any association's internal affairs. It gives the ministry significant controls over the internal management of associations, including the ability to dissolve associations; appoint new boards of directors; send two government representatives to any board meeting; prevent two associations from merging their operations; and appoint an auditor to examine an association's finances for any reason. The law also requires associations to inform the ministry of board meetings, submit all board decisions to the ministry for approval, disclose members' names, and obtain MOI security clearances for board members. The law includes severe penalties, including fines up to 10,000 dinars (\$14,000) and/or three months in jail per violation.

International and domestic NGOs have strongly criticized this new law, which they allege will make it almost impossible for any NGO to maintain its independence.

c. Freedom of Religion

The constitution provides for freedom to practice the rites of one's religion, provided that religious practices are consistent with "public order and morality"; however, the constitution also restricts freedom of religion in stipulating that Islamic law, which forbids the conversion of Muslims to another religion, governs Muslim citizens' personal status. The government also continued to impose some restrictions on religious freedom in practice.

The state religion is Islam, which effectively restricted others' rights, especially in terms of family law. For official recognition, the government required Christian denominations to have citizens among their constituency and to be recognized by the Middle East Council of Churches. Christian religious leaders stated that the MOI also conducts background investigations of church leaders. The government did not recognize the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the Druze, but each of these denominations conducted most religious services and activities without interference. The government did not recognize or permit Baha'is to hold religious councils, did not recognize marriages by the Baha'i Assembly, and did not permit Baha'is to register properties or endowments in the name of the Baha'i community. The government continued to stigmatize the Baha'is by recording "dashes" in the religion field of their national identity cards and categorized Druze as Muslims on these documents. Atheists must associate themselves with a recognized religion for official identification purposes.

In December 2007 the government required MOI approval for old and existing places of worship, after which several Christian churches reported being ordered to close. Representatives of a few evangelical churches reported that the MOI ordered landlords who previously rented them properties for church services and offices not to renew those leases.

There are no restrictions on collective worship as long as worship practices do not violate the law; however, several religious workers and pastors stated that authorities prevented them from conducting meetings or conferences during the year in hotels or public venues on security grounds.

Public schools provide mandatory religious instruction for all Muslim students during which Christian students are allowed to leave the classroom. Christian students in private and public schools must learn verses from the Koran and Islamic poetry in Arabic and social studies classes in preparation for mid-year and end-of-year exams. The constitution provides that congregations have the right to establish schools for the education of their own communities, "provided that they comply with the general provisions of the law and are subject to government control in matters relating to their curriculums and orientation."

Conversion to Islam is allowed; however, a Muslim may not convert to another religion. Such converts may lose their inheritance, children, spouse, and civil rights. Several converts reported being called in by the GID for repeated interrogations.

Neither the constitution nor the law explicitly prohibits proselytizing; however, the government restricted efforts to proselytize Muslims. During the year the government deported, detained, or refused residency renewal to approximately 30 Christian pastors and other religious activists after questioning them about their religious activities with

Muslims or converts. Four religious activists were later permitted to reenter the country.

The government monitors sermons at mosques and requires that preachers refrain from commentary that could, in its view, instigate social or political unrest. Christian activists reported that the GID regularly called them in for questioning regarding their congregation's membership, proselytizing of Muslims, and alleged distribution of Christian literature. Some Christian churchgoers reported the presence of security police at the church door requesting to see identity cards.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Muslims who converted to other religions reportedly faced societal discrimination, threats, and abuse from their families and Muslim religious leaders. Families usually strongly discouraged interfaith romantic relationships, at times ostracizing or, in some cases, committing violence against the couple.

Baha'is also faced societal discrimination, and Iraqi Mandeans residing in the country complained that individuals who did not understand their faith sometimes interfered in their baptismal rituals.

Following a February 4 public statement issued by the Council of Church Leaders in Jordan that accused evangelicals of being "illegitimate" and of creating sectarian strife, some articles critical of evangelicals appeared in the press, which contributed to an acrimonious public climate.

Anti-Semitism in the media was present, and editorial cartoons, articles, and opinion pieces sometimes depicted negative images of Jews without government response. Aside from expatriates, there was no resident Jewish community in the country.

For a more detailed discussion, see the *2008 International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/g/drl/irf.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The law provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, there were some restrictions. The government generally cooperated with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

The law requires that all minors obtain written permission from their father to apply for a passport. Consular officers and activists encountered cases of mothers who reported that they were prevented from departing with their children because authorities enforced requests from fathers to prevent their children from leaving the country. The GID sometimes withheld passports from citizens for alleged security reasons.

Citizens receive passports that are valid for five years. Some persons of Palestinian origin living in the country were citizens and received passports; however, the government reported that there were approximately 130,000 Palestinian refugees, mostly of Gazan origin, who did not qualify for citizenship. Approximately half received two-year passports valid for travel but which do not connote citizenship. West Bank residents without other travel documentation are eligible to receive five-year passports that do not connote citizenship.

Numerous human rights activists continued to charge that the government did not consistently apply citizenship laws, especially in cases in which passports were taken from citizens of Palestinian origin. The government maintained this policy was in line with its efforts to implement the government's disengagement from its former claims to the West Bank. However, activists complained that the process was not transparent and that the MOI appeal process was virtually nonexistent. Claimants reported that appeals were not resolved to their satisfaction. The government asserted that all cases it closed involved persons without valid claims to citizenship or travel documents.

Human rights activists claimed that approximately 10,000 to 12,000 former residents of Palestinian origin remained outside the country, and that the government refused to renew their passports at embassies overseas.

The law prohibits internal and external forced exile, and the government did not use forced exile in practice.

Protection of Refugees

The country is not a party to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 protocol and does not have any national legislation pertaining to the status and treatment of refugees. The government respected the UNHCR's eligibility determinations regarding asylum seekers, including those who entered the country clandestinely. A 1998 memorandum of understanding between the government and the UNHCR contains the definition of a refugee, confirms the principle of nonrefoulement, and allows recognized refugees a maximum stay of six months during which period a durable solution must be found. The government provided protection against the expulsion or forced return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened.

The UNRWA and the government continued to provide basic services, such as limited health, education, and social services, to Palestinian refugees during the year. At year's end approximately 1.9 million Palestinian refugees were registered with UNRWA.

The government granted nationality to approximately 700,000 persons displaced from former Jordanian territories during the 1967 war. An additional 120,000 persons displaced during the 1967 war held temporary residency permits. An additional 200,000 Palestinian refugees were also estimated to be living in the country without any direct assistance.

The government generally recognized UNHCR's requests to grant temporary protection for all Iraqi asylum seekers, including new arrivals, rejected cases, and recognized refugees whose cases had been suspended by resettlement countries. In May the government began requiring Iraqis to obtain visas before entering the country. According to a May 2007 survey by Norwegian research institute Fafo, an estimated 450,000 to 500,000 Iraqis were living in the country. At year's end the government was still using this figure in most of its assessments, although some NGOs suggested that the number could be significantly lower. As of November 30, 54,516 Iraqis had registered with UNHCR as refugees or asylum seekers, and most received legal and material assistance from UNHCR and other international and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations. The government provided education and health care services to Iraqis and tolerated the prolonged stay of many Iraqis beyond the expiration of the visit permits under which they entered the country.

The government did not permit Iraqi refugees to work, except under existing agreements for certain professional fields. Civil society organizations and religious leaders stated that this restriction led to impoverishment of some refugees.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The law does not provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully. Citizens have no legal authority to replace the king. They participate in the political system through their elected representatives in the lower house of parliament; however, the king may use his discretion to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, cabinet, and upper house of parliament; dissolve or extend parliament; and establish public policy. The cabinet, based on prime minister's recommendation, appoints the mayors of Amman, Wadi Musa (Petra), and Aqaba, a special economic zone. The mayors of the other 93 municipalities are elected.

After appointment by the king, a prime minister is required to submit his cabinet to a parliamentary vote of confidence, if there is a seated parliament. Executive power is

vested in the king (or, in his absence, the regent), who exercises his power through his ministers in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

The king proposes and dismisses extraordinary sessions of parliament and may postpone regular sessions for up to 60 days. If the government amends or enacts a law when parliament is not in session, it must submit the law to parliament for consideration during the next session; however, such "provisional" laws do not expire and, while technically subject to action by parliament when it returns to session, in practice remain in force without legislative approval.

Elections and Political Participation

In July 2007 nationwide multiparty municipal elections were held. Domestic civil society organizations and the opposition IAF alleged a number of election irregularities, including exploiting armed forces personnel to vote en masse for progovernment candidates. There were no local or international observers present.

In November 2007 multiparty parliamentary elections were held. The government permitted 150 local observers under the umbrella of the NCHR to monitor the elections and granted them full access inside polling stations. The NCHR and other local observers alleged a number of irregularities, including vote buying, multiple voting, and transfer of votes.

The government routinely licensed political parties and other associations but prohibited membership in unlicensed political parties. The High Court of Justice may dissolve a party if it violates the constitution or the law. A 2007 Political Parties Law stipulated that a political party must have a minimum of 500 founding members from five governorates, causing 17 of the 36 existing parties to dissolve themselves or became legally defunct in 2007. The law also created a mechanism for public financing of political parties. Opposition parties, including dissolved parties, complained that the law was unconstitutional and obstructed political dynamism. Political parties, NGOs, and independent candidates found the registration requirements, restrictions, and processes to be onerous and costly. Additionally, parties criticized the GID's new annual screening process of founding members. However, NGOs and political analysts largely agreed that the law did not fundamentally change the political system, citing the historic lack of support for political parties and the fact that only small parties with few members were dissolved.

The electoral law leads to significant underrepresentation in urban areas. For instance, Amman's second district has more than 200,000 constituents and was granted four representatives, while Karak's sixth district has approximately 7,000 constituents and was granted three representatives. Analysts considered electoral districting unfair, claiming it was intended to reduce the representation of areas heavily populated by

citizens of Palestinian origin and because of a lack of balance between the population and the number of seats per district. The law allows voters to choose one candidate in multiple-seat districts. In the largely tribal society, citizens tended to cast their vote for members of the same tribe.

Citizens of Palestinian origin, estimated to be more than half of the total population, are underrepresented at all levels of government.

The election law reserves nine lower house seats for Christians and three for either the Circassian or Chechen ethnic minorities. No seats were reserved for the relatively small Druze population, but they were permitted to hold office under their government classification as Muslims. The law also stipulates that the non-Christian and Circassian/Chechen seats must be held by Muslims. In November 2007 King Abdullah appointed four Christians to serve in the upper house. Christians served regularly as cabinet ministers. The government traditionally reserves some positions in the upper levels of the military for Christians (4 percent); however, Muslims held all senior command positions.

Women have the right to vote. Seven women serve in the Senate, seven in the Chamber of Deputies (six seats are reserved for them), four in the cabinet, and one as governor. The law provides a 20 percent quota for women in municipal council seats. The MOJ established a minimum membership quota of 15 percent for women in the Judicial Institute of Jordan; such membership is a prerequisite to becoming a judge.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government increased investigations of alleged corruption; however, there were few convictions for corruption during the year, raising criticisms that officials enjoyed impunity. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal business interests was widespread; allegations of lack of transparency in government procurement and dispute settlement remained.

On June 1, the Audit Bureau released its annual report to the public, which noted that the bureau prosecuted 48 cases of violations of handling public money totaling 1.06 million dinars (approximately \$1.5 million). Judgments were issued in 16 of the cases, and the government reclaimed approximately 43,000 dinars (\$61,000). The remaining cases were pending further court action or were in settlement talks at year's end.

On June 3, the Anticorruption Commission announced that it referred its first 21 cases to the courts for prosecution. The cases dealt with fraud, misuse of public office, forgery, bribery, and embezzlement and reportedly resulted from over 200 complaints that were investigated. Some commentators questioned the commission's independence

and effectiveness. In 2007 two members of the commission resigned over allegations of corruption. Individuals who submit baseless claims to the commission may be subject to civil and criminal prosecution.

The law requires certain government officials to declare their assets privately to be reviewed by the chief justice in the event of a complaint. On May 16, three days after a one-month grace period for reporting ended, the government stated that 2,863 of 3,600 officials had complied with the law. Subsequently, 246 officials complied after receiving court notices and 150 of the remaining cases were forwarded to prosecutors for legal action. Under the law, a failure to submit disclosures could result in prison from a week to three years or fines from five to 200 dinars (\$7 to \$280). At year's end officials failing to submit a disclosure had not been punished.

The law provides for public access to government information once it becomes a matter of legal record but allows requests to be denied for reasons of "national security, public health, and personal freedoms." Journalists criticized the law, claiming that it permits the government to deny requests without justification. In a Higher Media Council survey released on July 21, nearly half of the journalists surveyed reported difficulty accessing information or had requests denied outright.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Domestic and international human rights groups operated with some restrictions, publicly investigating and reporting allegations of human rights abuses throughout the year; however, the organizations often claimed that the government did not rectify the problems they identified. Major local human rights observers included the government-funded NCHR and several independent organizations: the MIZAN Law Group for Human Rights, the Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies, the AOHR, the CDFJ, and the Adaleh Center for Human Rights Studies. The new law on associations introduces new oversight powers to the government over civil society and increases the government's role in any association's internal affairs.

The government generally cooperated with international NGOs, the UN, and other international governmental organizations; however, some observers said they were unable to meet with security detainees held incommunicado.

The government provided the NCHR most of its funding, which other local human rights groups complained unduly influenced the organization; however, the NCHR's reporting was regarded as objective and critical. The NCHR commissioner general and chairman of the board are appointed based on the prime minister's recommendation. On March 23, the NCHR issued its fourth annual report on the state of human rights in 2007, highlighting as negative developments the Crime Prevention Law; excessive use

of administrative detention; withdrawal of Jordanian passports and ID cards; regression of workers' rights, especially those of migrant domestic workers; recession in democratic and political development as evidenced by both the municipal and parliamentary elections; and worsening conditions of child labor.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, disability, language, or social status; however, the law prohibits some types of discrimination. The law treats women unequally, and minorities faced discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas.

Women

Violence and abuse against women continued, including widespread domestic violence, numerous honor crimes, and spousal rape. In rural areas violence against women was reported more frequently than in major cities; however, women's rights activists speculated that many incidents in cities went unreported.

The law stipulates a sentence of not less than ten years' imprisonment with hard labor for rape of a girl or woman 15 years of age or older. Spousal rape is not illegal. The PSD Family Protection Unit (FPU) treated and investigated 507 cases of sexual assault from January until August 31.

Women may file a complaint in court against their spouses for physical abuse; however, in practice familial and societal pressures discouraged them from seeking legal remedies. From January to August 31, the FPU forwarded 539 complaints of domestic violence for prosecution. Spousal abuse is technically grounds for divorce, but husbands may seek to claim religious authority to strike their wives. In January the Chamber of Deputies endorsed the Family Protection Law, which gave the FPU jurisdiction to handle cases of domestic violence and included protection order provisions with penalties of up to six months in prison.

Cultural norms continued to discourage victims of domestic violence from seeking medical or legal assistance. The government-run shelter, Dar al-Wafaq, assisted approximately 500 victims of domestic abuse and provides reconciliation and counseling services to victims and their families. The FPU domestic violence hotline received 2,307 calls during the year. The NGO Jordanian Women's Union also maintained a telephone hotline for victims of domestic violence and sheltered abuse victims.

During the year authorities prosecuted 16 reported instances of honor crimes that resulted in death of the victim, although activists reported that numerous additional

unreported cases likely occurred. A November 2007 UN Development Fund for Women study stated that 25 percent of honor crime victims in the country were killed merely because of their suspected involvement in an illicit relationship, while 15 percent were killed after such a relationship was allegedly proven. Although maximum sentences for first- and second-degree murder were death and 15 years' imprisonment, respectively, the court usually found perpetrators of honor killings guilty of a "crime of passion," which merited a maximum sentence of three years. While defendants were almost universally found guilty, they often received token sentences of no more than six months.

After the king's November 9 call for harsher punishments for individuals convicted of harming women and children, two men in separate cases received prison sentences of seven and one-half years for honor-related crimes. No legislative changes were made, however, in line with these comments, and there was no indication that the king's view had been incorporated into long-term judicial policy. On December 1, a criminal court sentenced the men, both of whom said they murdered their female relatives for tainting their family's honor. In one case, a man shot his niece in August 2007 because she refused to divorce a man she had sex with before they were married. In the other case, the man strangled his 16-year-old sister in January because she disappeared for three days after a quarrel with her husband and refused to tell her brother where she had been.

On March 7, a man reportedly shot and killed his 23-year-old sister after he found her walking in a forested area at 1 a.m. with a houseguest in Azraq. The criminal prosecutor charged the brother on March 10 with premeditated murder and two others in complicity with the murder. The case was ongoing at year's end.

The case of the man who shot and killed his daughter in 2007 after forcing her to undergo an abortion for a pregnancy out of wedlock was ongoing at year's end.

The police regularly placed potential victims of honor crimes in involuntary protective custody in Jweideh Correctional and Rehabilitation Center, a detention facility where some have remained for more than 20 years. A human rights organization estimated that at year's end more than 20 women were in protective custody. One NGO continued to work with the government to provide a temporary but unofficial shelter where the women could live in relative anonymity as an alternate to protective custody.

Prostitution is illegal, but it occurred.

According to the law, sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. The law does not make a distinction between sexual assault and sexual harassment; both carry a minimum prison sentence of four years with hard labor. Women's groups state that harassment is common but that victims are often hesitant to file a complaint and rarely do so.

Women experienced legal discrimination in pension and social security benefits, inheritance, divorce, ability to travel, child custody, citizenship, and in certain limited circumstances, the value of their Shari'a court testimony.

Under Shari'a as applied in the country, female heirs receive half the amount that male heirs receive, and non-Muslim widows of Muslim spouses have no inheritance rights. A sole female heir receives half of her parents' estate; the balance goes to designated male relatives. A sole male heir inherits both of his parents' property. Male Muslim heirs have the duty to provide for all family members who need assistance. The existing temporary divorce law allows women to seek divorces and retain their financial rights only under specific circumstances, such as spousal abuse. In these cases the woman has the burden of proof. Special courts for each denomination adjudicate marriage and divorce matters for Christians.

The government provided men with more generous social security benefits than women. The government continued pension payments of deceased male civil servants but discontinued payments of deceased female civil servants to their heirs. Laws and regulations governing health insurance for civil servants do not permit women to extend their health insurance coverage to dependents or spouses. However, divorced and widowed women may extend coverage to their children.

Women activists complain that the law granting women equal pay for equal work was not consistently enforced. Many women stated that traditional social pressures discouraged them from pursuing professional careers, especially after marriage. During the year the unemployment rate for women was 23.6 percent, compared to 12 percent for the country as a whole.

The law states that women have the right to obtain passports without the written permission of their husbands, although in practice the husband's permission is often required. Married women do not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children; however, female citizens married to noncitizen men can pass citizenship to their children upon the permission of the Council of Ministers. In practice this permission was usually granted, except in cases where the father was of Palestinian origin. Women may not petition for citizenship for their noncitizen husbands. The husbands themselves must apply for citizenship after fulfilling a requirement of 15 years of continuous residency. Once the husbands have obtained citizenship, they may apply to transmit citizenship to their children. However, in practice such an application may take years, and in many cases citizenship may be denied to the husband and children. Such children become stateless and, if they do not hold legal residency, lose the right to attend public school or seek other government services.

Children

Education is compulsory from ages six through 16 and free until age 18; however, no legislation exists to enforce the law or punish guardians for violating it.

During the year authorities received and investigated complaints of physical abuse and sexual abuse of children. The law specifies punishment for abuses against children; for example, conviction for rape of a child less than 15 years of age potentially carries the death penalty. The current minimum age for marriage is 18 years. However, with the consent of a judge and a guardian, children as young as 15, in most cases girls, may be married. The National Council for Family Affairs' July report stated that current legislation does not provide sufficient protection from abuse to women or children, specifically citing the legal authorization for parents to discipline their children using force. The government continued to fund a child protection center that provided temporary shelter, medical care, and rehabilitation for abused children age six to 12. From January to August 31, the FPU handled 353 cases of child abuse, of which 320 were sexual assaults.

In January the Chamber of Deputies endorsed the Family Protection Law, which covers violence against children and gave the FPU jurisdiction over child abuse cases.

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, but the government prohibits trafficking in children. Other statutes governing kidnapping, assault, rape, and fraud may be used to prosecute trafficking offenses, including withholding of passports and non-payment of wages. International and local observers assess that the trafficking of domestic workers remains a serious problem.

The country was a destination and transit point for men and women from South and Southeast Asia trafficked for forced labor, as well as a destination for women from Eastern Europe and Morocco for prostitution. Women from countries including Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines migrated to work as domestic servants, but some were subjected to conditions of forced labor, such as withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, non-payment of wages, threats, and physical or sexual abuse. Some Chinese, Bangladeshi, Indian, Sri Lankan, and Vietnamese men and women encountered conditions similar to forced labor in some factories in Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs), including unlawful withholding of passports, nonpayment of wages and overtime, and physical abuse. However, reports of forced labor conditions in QIZs substantially decreased from previous years. Foreign workers in the QIZs and domestic workers were generally recruited by registered recruitment agencies that worked with agencies in source countries.

Authorities may utilize laws prohibiting slavery, kidnapping, withholding of passports, and other crimes to prosecute offenders, with penalties of up to three years'

imprisonment. As of October 31, the government investigated and forwarded 19 cases for prosecution involving forced labor offenses. In July the government amended the labor law to extend protections over domestic and agriculture laborers; however, at year's end implementing regulations had not been enacted. A separate amendment added penalties for forced labor and sexual assault of employees, including a fine of up to 1,000 dinars (\$1,400) for threatening or coercing a person to work, including withholding passports.

The government provided no formal protective services for victims of trafficking; however, a few local NGOs and embassies offered limited services. Some foreign workers who fled from abusive employers or faced sexual assault were falsely charged with crimes by their employer or put into "protective custody." To varying degrees, source country embassies operated their own shelters for domestic workers fleeing their employers. In July the Ministry of Labor (MOL) created a humanitarian and legal assistance fund to assist migrant workers, especially victims of trafficking.

The MOL continued antitrafficking efforts, including participation in a forced labor and trafficking awareness campaign in QIZs, distribution of a guidebook for domestic workers on their rights, and operation of a multilanguage abuse prevention hotline.

The State Department's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* can be found at www.state.gov/g/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The law provides equal rights to persons with disabilities, who numbered around 200,000, according to government estimates, although UN estimates placed the number closer to 500,000. Access to education and other services in rural areas for persons with disabilities was widely reported by citizens and NGOs as a problem. The Special Buildings Code Department is tasked to enforce accessibility provisions and oversees retrofitting of existing buildings to comply with building codes; however, many private and public office buildings continued to have limited or no access for persons with disabilities.

The law mandates that public and private sector establishments between 25 and 50 workers employ one disabled person, and establishments over 50 workers must reserve 4 percent of their positions for persons with disabilities; however, the NCHR received some complaints from disabled persons regarding employers who discriminated against them on the grounds of disability. High unemployment restricted job opportunities for persons with disabilities. The government provided monetary assistance to citizens with severe mental and multiple physical disabilities whose families earned less than 250 dinars (\$350) per month.

National/Ethnic/Racial Minorities

There were three groups of Palestinians residing in the country, many of whom faced some discrimination. Those who migrated to the country and the Jordan-controlled West Bank after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war were given full citizenship, as were those who migrated to the country after the 1967 war and hold no residency entitlement in the West Bank. Those still residing in the West Bank after 1967 were no longer eligible to claim full citizenship but were allowed to obtain temporary passports without national numbers, provided they did not also carry a Palestinian Authority travel document. Refugees who fled Gaza after 1967 were not entitled to citizenship and were issued temporary passports without national numbers.

Several human rights activists maintained that despite the codified passport issuance procedures, MOI employees revoked national numbers of many citizens of Palestinian origin. Individuals claimed that their temporary passports were confiscated after spending time in the West Bank. Palestinians were underrepresented in parliament and appointments to many senior positions in the government and the military, as well as in admittance to public universities, and had limited access to university scholarships.

During the year there were reports of societal discrimination against Iraqis living in the country. Some employers reportedly refused to pay or underpaid Iraqis working illegally, and some landlords reportedly would not rent or sell to Iraqis.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Societal discrimination against homosexuals existed. There were reports of individuals leaving the country out of fear they would be harmed by their family for being homosexual.

On October 23, security forces arrested for "lewd acts" four homosexuals in a park in West Amman following a set-up by the police. Amman governor Sa'ad Al-Manaseer placed them in solitary confinement in Jweidah prison without bail. They were released after guaranteeing they would not carry out any such acts in the future.

HIV/AIDS was a largely taboo subject, and public awareness was limited. Many citizens assumed the disease was a problem exclusively of foreigners due to government requirements that foreigners be tested for HIV annually. Foreigners who tested HIV positive were deported.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides citizens working in the private sector, in some government-owned companies, and in certain professions in the public sector the right to form and join unions, and in practice this right was respected. According to official figures, more than 10 percent of the workforce was organized into 17 unions. The law limits membership to citizens, effectively excluding the country's more than 200,000 registered foreign workers from union membership. Some unions represented the interests of foreign workers informally; for instance, the textile union provided medical and legal services to migrant workers in textile factories in addition to citizens.

Government involvement in union activities continued to occur. For example, the government required unions to register and to be members of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), the sole trade union federation. The government subsidized and audited the GFJTU's salaries and activities, and it monitored union elections in the event of a complaint to ensure compliance with the law. In recent election cycles, when the number of candidates exceeded the number of seats, the government allegedly persuaded some candidates to withdraw.

Workers have the right to strike under certain conditions. The law mandates that workers must give the employer and government, at a minimum, 14 days' notice of a strike. Strikes are prohibited if a labor dispute is under mediation or arbitration.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Unions have the right to bargain collectively, and in practice the government respected this right. The constitution prohibits antiunion discrimination, and the MOL received no complaints of antiunion discrimination during the year.

Nearly 75 percent of the workers in the QIZs were noncitizens and thus were not permitted to form or participate in unions or to engage in collective bargaining.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor, except in a state of emergency such as war or natural disaster; however, there were reports of forced labor, particularly of domestic workers and foreign workers in QIZs, during the year (see section 5). In July the labor law was amended to include fines for practices related to forced labor, including withholding of passports, ranging from 500 to 1,000 dinars (\$700 to \$1,400). The law does not specifically prohibit forced or compulsory labor by children, and such practices were known to occur.

During the year allegations of forced labor decreased substantially due to more rigorous MOL inspections. The MOL regularly investigated such allegations, required violators to pay fines when appropriate, publicized the outcomes of their findings, and

forwarded 19 cases related to trafficking of QIZ or domestic workers to the courts for criminal prosecution.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The labor law forbids employment for children under the age of 16, except as apprentices; however, there were reports of child labor. Children worked as street vendors, carpenters, blacksmiths, and painters in Amman, Zarqa, and Irbid, and in agriculture throughout the country. In April the NCHR estimated there were approximately 50,000 working children between the ages of five and 17 in the country.

Children under the age of 18 may not work for more than six hours continuously between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., or during weekends, religious celebrations, or national holidays. Children under 18 may not work in hazardous occupations. The law provides that employers who hire a child under the age of 16 must pay a fine of up to 500 dinars (approximately \$700), which is doubled if the offense is repeated.

A 2007 MOL study estimated that 13 percent of working children in the country were subject to forced labor and 16 percent earn 50 dinars (\$70) or less per month. The study stated that heavy machinery, noise pollution, poor lighting, and exposure to chemicals were common risks faced by working children.

The MOL's Child Labor Unit coordinates government action regarding child labor and is tasked to receive, investigate, and address child labor complaints; however, no complaints had been received by year's end, as Article 77 of the Labor Law, which sets penalties regarding the illegal recruitment of children, was not enforced. The government provided limited training on child labor, including identification, to the 140 MOL inspectors responsible for enforcing the relevant laws. Labor inspectors have issued fines for child labor violations but state they often attempt alternative approaches first, such as removal from hazardous conditions or attendance in nonformal education.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national minimum wage was 110 dinars (\$154) per month, which did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. MOL inspectors enforced the minimum wage but due to limited resources were unable to ensure full compliance.

In some cases, the law requires overtime pay for hours worked in excess of the 48-hour standard workweek. Compulsory overtime is prohibited, but the law allows the employer to require the employee to work more than 48 hours a week for specific purposes such as carrying out annual inventory, closing accounts, preparing to sell goods at discounted prices, avoiding loss to goods that would otherwise be exposed to

damage, and receiving special deliveries. In such cases, the actual working hours may not exceed 10 hours per day, the employee must be paid overtime, and the period may not last more than 30 days. Employees were entitled to one day off per week.

The law specifies a number of health and safety requirements for workers, which the MOL is authorized to enforce. Workers do not have a statutory right to remove themselves from hazardous conditions without risking the loss of their jobs. Foreign workers were more susceptible to dangerous or unfair conditions. Some foreign workers suffered from abusive labor practices in factories, although allegations decreased substantially following more rigorous inspection efforts. MOL inspections identified problems at certain factories regarding delayed or non-payment of wages, excessive or forced overtime, withholding identity or travel documents, non-contractual deductions for food and shelter, and physical abuse of workers. In such cases, MOL issued warnings and fines and closed some factories.

Abuse of foreign domestic servants reportedly continued, although it was not thoroughly documented. Employers allegedly routinely limited their domestic employees' freedom of movement, failed to pay full wages, did not allow them a day off, imposed isolation and excessively long working hours, and often confiscated identity or travel documents. In July the MOL created a fund to provide support to victims of labor abuses. The fund may be used to provide humanitarian assistance and to pay the legal fees for victims filing criminal or libel cases against their employers. In September the fund paid for the repatriations of 38 Bangladeshi workers when their factory closed without notice.